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BOOK NOTICES

The Gospel of Jesus and the Problems of Democracy. By Henry C. Vedder. New York: Macmillan, 1914. Pp. xiv+410. \$1.50.

The author, as many of our readers know, is professor of church history in Crozer Theological Seminary. A number of his books have been reviewed in these columns. The present work is dedicated "to the millions who toil without hope, that the thousands may enjoy without thought." These rather startling phrases prepare the reader for a treatise along unconventional lines. By way of introduction to a study of democracy from the standpoint of Jesus and Christianity, the author shows, with a number of recent writers, that democracy in the field of sociology demands a corresponding movement in the field of theology. The "old theology" is aristocratic. We need a democratic interpretation of Christianity and the Bible as the spiritual counterpart of our new social-democratic awakening.

Dr. Vedder belongs to the "right wing" of socialism. He is, therefore, not a "red," or "revolutionary," in the obnoxious sense of these terms. Whether one agrees with all that is found in this book or not, there is no doubt that it will prove to be a stimulating volume, alike for its moral and spiritual earnestness and for the information with which it is packed. We may doubt the economic thoroughness and clarity of one who makes the sweeping declaration that "all interest and dividends are immoral," and yet we may find much of economic truth and insight in his diagnosis and prescriptions. One of the characteristics of most socialists today is absence of the dogmatism which formerly attached to the followers of Karl Marx.

It is just at this point that Dr. Vedder's book will have its greatest practical value. Socialism, with him, is a deduction from Jesus' doctrine of the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man. But it is a distant ideal. Having made his confession of faith, our author states very clearly that he is not in any sense an advocate of violence. He is willing to work with all who are striving to realize a greater measure of economic justice, even if they do not fully agree with him. The spirit which this volume represents is vastly on the increase. The tendency to merge theological democracy with economic democracy is rapidly becoming tidal.

That Dr. Vedder's immediate program does not imply subversion of the present social order, in the socialist sense, is clear from many passages in his book. Speaking of the demand for social justice, he emphasizes that it is not only insistent but general, and that we are an aroused, a determined, almost an angry, people, yet doubtful as

to just what to do. This period of doubt, he declares, will not long endure. Now, therefore, is the psychological moment to make changes in our system radical enough to avert revolution, before revolutionary methods are demanded by the irresistible pressure of the mob spirit (p. 57). Immediately following this pronouncement, he says that the first great fundamental wrong which our social order perpetrates is that it shuts away from men the larger part of the soil and permits a few to speculate in the substance of the world which God has made for all. Speaking further of the land question, when discussing the "slum problem," Dr. Vedder says that the tene- mential evil is largely economic. We put a pre- mium on speculation in land by taxing vacant lots lightly; and we impose a penalty on the in- vestment of capital in buildings by taxing im- provements heavily (p. 179).

The author's point of difference with the official position of the church is that organized Christianity has insisted upon salvation through correctness of theological belief and through a purely individual morality, while it has ignored the problem of economic injustice. He points out that though money has been spent like water in the interest of evangelism, the church has made no appreciable advance during the last generation; it is just holding its own; it is marking time, not marching to conquest. From these facts, the author deduces that only one conclusion is possible: the church makes no successful appeal to the people at large because it has ceased to meet the wants of the age. It must change its policy radically, or lose even more in the coming decades.

The Negro Races. A Sociological Study. By Jerome Dowd. New York: Neale Publishing Co., 1914. Pp. 310. \$2.50.

This is the second number to be issued in a proposed three-volume work by the head of the department of sociology in the University of Oklahoma. Professor Dowd is one of the best authorities in this country on the negro. His first volume considered the West Africans; the present volume takes up the Africans of the East and South; while the final one is to treat of the negroes in America. Work of this kind is valuable, not only for the scientific investigator, but for those who are interested in the practical work of missions. One of the best means of training for effective missionary work is a purely dispassionate study of native races—their social usages and general state of mind. Professor Dowd points out that a deplorable error of missionary work in Africa and elsewhere has been the effort to reconstruct the natives in the likeness of the Europeans. The introduction of